

Message Text

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LIMDIS

E. O. 11652: XGDS 3

TAGS: PGOV, PINR, TH

SUBJ: M.R. SENI PRAMOT

REF : BANGKOK A-314, NOV. 25, 1974 (NOTAL)

INTRODUCTION

POLITICAL MANEUVERING CONTINUES AMONG LEADERS WHOSE PARTIES
FARED WELL IN LAST SUNDAY'S ELECTIONS. A NEW PRIME MINISTER
AND COALITION HAVE NOT YET EMERGED. IT SEEMS CLEAR, HOWEVER,
THAT SENI PRAMOT, LEADER OF THE VICTORIOUS DEMOCRAT PARTY,
WILL BECOME EITHER PRIME MINISTER OR LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION
IN THE PARLIAMENT.

SUMMARY:

SENI PRAMOT IS PRIME MINISTERIAL MATERIAL. WELL
VERSED IN LAW, DIPLOMACY, POLITICS, AND GOVERNMENT ADMINI-
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STRATION, SENI IS MORE IN THE MOLD OF AN IDEAL LEADER IN

U.S. TERMS THAN ANY PRIME MINISTER OF THAILAND FOR MANY YEARS. HE IS COMPLETELY DEVOTED TO THE PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRATIC, CONSTITUTIONAL RULE. HE POSSESSES MANY OF THE GOOD QUALITIES OF HIS OLD FRIEND, FORMER PRIME MINISTER SANYA THAMMASAK. HE IS HIGHLY RESPECTED, INFLUENTIAL, HONEST, INTELLIGENT, CAPABLE, AND CLOSE TO KING PHUMIPHON ADUNYADET. DESPITE WHAT SOME OF HIS POLITICAL OPPONENTS WOULD SAY, SENI ALSO POSSESSES MANY OF THOSE QUALITIES WHICH SANYA LACKED IN VARYING DEGREES: HE IS A STRONG, FIRM, ARTICULATE, AND OUTSPOKEN LEADER WHO IS WILLING TO TAKE A STAND AND WHO CAN BEAR PUBLIC CRITICISM. ABOVE ALL, SENI IS AN EXPERIENCED POLITICIAN WHO ENJOYS PLAYING THE GAME AND PLAYS IT WELL.

SENI HELPED TO ESTABLISH THE DEMOCRAT PARTY IN 1946 AND SERVED AS ITS DEPUTY LEADER (1946-68) AND LEADER (1968-75). HE HAS ALSO BEEN UNOFFICIAL LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT OPPOSITION IN AND OUT OF PARLIAMENT DURING MANY OF THE 30 YEARS SINCE HIS BRIEF THREE MONTH TERM AS PRIME MINISTER IN 1945. HE HAS BEEN PARTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE IMAGE OF THE DEMOCRAT PARTY AS CIVILIAN OPPOSITION TO MILITARY DOMINATION OF THE COUNTRY. UNDER HIS LEADERSHIP, THE DEMOCRAT PARTY RECENTLY PURGED ITSELF OF ITS OLD GUARD AND ACQUIRED NEW, YOUNGER MEMBERS AND A PLATFORM OF MILDLY "SOCIALIST" IDEAS. WHILE CRITICS FEEL THAT HIS TURN TOWARD SOCIALISM IS NOTHING MORE THAN THE EFFORT OF AN OLD POLITICIAN TO MODERNIZE HIS PARTY FOR THE SAKE OF ITS POLITICAL SURVIVABILITY, SENI'S PUBLIC STATEMENTS FOR NEARLY A DECADE REFLECT A GENUINE SYMPATHY FOR THE LESS PRIVILEGED GROUPS IN THAILAND, AND A BELIEF THAT GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE RESPONSIVE TO THE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION AND NOT JUST TO A SMALL GROUP. SENI IS BY NO MEANS ANTI-CAPITALIST, A THREAT TO DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN PRIVATE INVESTMENT, OR NATIONALIZATION-MINDED. HE IS SIMPLY AN ARISTOCRAT ASKING HIS FELLOW MEMBERS OF THE PRIVILEGED CLASSES TO DEVELOP A GREATER SENSE OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY. OVER THE LONGER RUN THE APPLICATION OF HIS REFORMIST IDEAS WOULD WORK SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC STRUCTURE.

A MEMBER OF THE ROYAL FAMILY OF THAILAND, SENI IS A MONARCHIST. HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH KING PHUMIPHON IS CONFIDENTIAL

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PERSONALLY CLOSE, BUT HE MAINTAINS HIS DISTANCE FROM THE KING ON POLITICAL MATTERS AND HAS GONE AGAINST THE KING'S WISHES IN THE PAST. HE FEELS THAT A CLOSER RELATIONSHIP WOULD DETRACT FROM HIS FREEDOM OF ACTION AND INDEPENDENCE. SENI AND THE DEMOCRATS BELIEVE THAT THE ONLY CONCERN OF THE MILITARY SHOULD BE IN DEFENDING THE COUNTRY AND HAVE BEEN HIGHLY CRITICAL OF ITS DEEP AND CONTINUING INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS, GOVERNMENT, AND BUSINESS. THE TWO GROUPS HAVE ANTAGONIZED

ONE ANOTHER OVER THE YEARS AND SHARE ALMOST NO MUTUAL RESPECT. MOST MILITARY OFFICERS LIKE SENI AS AN INDIVIDUAL, BUT ARE VERY WARY OF HIS POLICIES TOWARD THE MILITARY. SENI HAS LIMITED BUT IMPORTANT TIES WITH THE SINO-THAI FINANCIAL COMMUNITY. HE MOVES IN BANGKOK'S EDUCATED AND POLITICALLY CONSCIOUS CIVILIAN CIRCLES, FROM WHICH HE DRAWS MUCH OF HIS SUPPORT.

SENI IS ONE OF THE UNITED STATES' OLDEST AND CLOSEST FRIENDS IN THAILAND. HE WORKED CLOSELY WITH US AGAINST THE JAPANESE DURING WORLD WAR II. WITTY, PERSONABLE, AND SOPHISTICATED, HE UNDERSTANDS THE WEST. HE ALSO UNDERSTANDS AND FREQUENTLY AGREES WITH U.S. POLICIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. A GOVERNMENT UNDER HIS FIRM DIRECTION WOULD NOT BE INIMICAL TO U.S. INTERESTS AND GOALS IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD, BUT MAY CAUSE US SOME PUBLIC RELATIONS PROBLEMS.

WHAT SENI'S ADMINISTRATION WOULD EMPHASIZE

SENI TOLD THEH CHONGKHADIKIT OF THE "BANGKOK POST" JANUARY 27 THAT THE MAIN PROBLEM FACING ANY GOVERNMENT HE FORMS WILL BE THE VAST DAMAGE WHICH RECENT FLOODS HAVE CAUSED IN THE SOUTH. THE SECOND PROBLEM HE IDENTIFIES IS INFLATION AND THE POLICIES REQUIRED TO SLOW IT DOWN. HE TOLD THEH THAT HIS PARTY'S LACK OF A LARGER MANDATE WOULD MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO TAKE THE STRONG MEASURES REQUIRED TO ATTACK ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, AND THAT ANY STEPS HE TAKES ARE BOUND TO THREATEN VESTED INTERESTS AND CAUSE INSTABILITY.

SENI HAS ALSO PROMISED TO FOCUS ON THE STATUS OF MINORITY AND INSURGENT GROUPS. TO PROMOTE UNITY, HE HAS LONG WORKED FOR GREATER ASSIMILATION OF THE CHINESE AND MUSLIM MINORITIES. HE IS SAID TO HAVE USED INTERMEDIARIES TO CONTACT INSURGENT LEADERS IN THE NORTHEAST AND THE SOUTH. A YEAR AGO, HE CALLED FOR A GENERAL AMNESTY TO ALLOW NON-COMMUNIST INSURGENTS TO RETURN TO THE FOLD.

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ON THE BASIS OF ALMOST 40 YEARS OF PUBLIC STATEMENTS, WE WOULD ALSO EXPECT SENI TO MAKE THE ROYAL THAI GOVERNMENT MORE RESPONSIBLE AND VISIBLE TO THE GREAT MASS OF POPULATION, EITHER DIRECTLY OR THROUGH ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES. WE WOULD ALSO EXPECT HIM TO VIGOROUSLY PRESS FOR THE ELIMINATION OF CORRUPTION IN GOVERNMENT, FOR AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE WELFARE AND INCOME OF FARMERS AND THE POOR, AND FOR A REDUCTION IN THE PERVASIVE MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN FINANCIAL AND BUSINESS AFFAIRS. END SUMMARY.

A. EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

1. MOM RATCHAWONG (A ROYAL TITLE) SENI WAS BORN ON 2 FEBRUARY 1905 (OR PERHAPS 26 MAY 1905 IN NAKHON SAWAN PROVINCE.

HE CONSIDERS NORTHERN THAILAND HIS HOME. HE WAS EDUCATED FIRST AT SUAN KULAP COLLEGE, A FAMOUS PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL IN BANGKOK. UPON HIS GRADUATION IN 1917, HIS FAMILY SENT HIM TO ENGLAND WHERE HE COMPLETED FORM VI (GRADE 12) AT TRENT COLLEGE IN 1920. FOLLOWING GRADUATION FROM TRENT HE STUDIED AT OXFORD WHERE HE RECEIVED HIS B.A. IN 1924 (SECOND CLASS HONORS). SENI THEN READ LAW AT GREY'S INN AND IN 1928 PASSED THE EXAMINATION FOR THE ENGLISH BARRISTER-AT-LAW (FIRST CLASS HONORS).

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HE RETURNED TO THAILAND IN 1929 AND PASSED THE EXAMINATION FOR THE THAI BARRISTER-AT-LAW. SENI LIKES TO TALK ABOUT THE MEETINGS HE, PRIDI PHANOMYONG, AND OTHER THAI STUDENTS IN EUROPE USED TO HOLD TO EXCHANGE WHAT WERE THEN CONSIDERED RADICAL POLITICAL IDEAS.

B. EARLY CAREER

2. SENI ENTERED GOVERNMENT SERVICE IN 1929 AS AN APPRENTICE IN THE THAI SUPREME COURT. HE BECAME A JUDGE ATTACHED TO THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE IN 1930. IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO THE

1932 REVOLUTION WHICH OVERTHREW THE ABSOLUTE MONARCHY, SENI WAS APPOINTED A JUDGE IN THE CIVIL COURT. THE REVOLUTION REQUIRED A NUMBER OF CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT, AND IN 1933 SENI WAS NAMED AN ASSISTANT TO THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S SUPREME COURT COMMITTEE. HE ALSO BEGAN EDITING THE THAMMASAT LAW REPORT THAT SAME YEAR AND REMAINED EDITOR OF THAT JOURNAL UNTIL 1940. HE BECAME SECRETARY TO THE SUPREME COURT IN 1934. TWO YEARS LATER HE WAS ONCE AGAIN NAMED A CONFIDENTIAL

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JUDGE, THIS TIME TO THE COURT OF APPEALS. IN 1937 PRIME MINISTER PHIBUN SONGKHRAM TRANSFERRED SENI TO THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE TO ASSIST IN REVISING THAILAND'S TAX LAWS.

C. FREE THAI PERIOD

3. SENI TRANSFERRED TO THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS LATE IN 1939 AND WAS PROMOTED TO SPECIAL GRADE RANK. EARLY THE NEXT YEAR HE BECAME THAILAND'S ENVOY EXTRAORDINARY AND MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY TO THE UNITED STATES. SHORTLY AFTER THE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR, THE JAPANESE INVADED THAILAND AND CONVINCED PRIME MINISTER PHIBUN THAT THAILAND SHOULD BE AN ALLY OF JAPAN. SENI STILL TELLS THE STORY OF HOW, AS HIS COUNTRY'S ENVOY TO WASHINGTON, HE RECEIVED THAILAND'S DECLARATION OF WAR ON THE UNITED STATES, RECOGNIZED THAT IT WAS "RIDICULOUS", AND IMMEDIATELY "FILED IT IN THE WASTE BASKET." SENI SAYS THAT HE THEN TELEPHONED THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE AND ASKED FOR AN APPOINTMENT TO SEE "SOME OF THE BIG BRASS". THE RESULT OF THE APPOINTMENT WAS THAT THE UNITED STATES REFUSED TO RECOGNIZE THAILAND'S DECLARATION OF WAR AND THE ANTI-JAPANESE FREE THAI MOVEMENT WAS BORN.

4. SENI BECAME TITULAR HEAD OF THE U.S. -SPONSORED FREE THAI MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES, AND HELPED ORGANIZE THE MOVEMENT IN THAILAND UNDER PRIDI PHANOMYONG. TOWARD THE END OF THE WAR, A GREAT MANY THAI NATIONALISTS WERE ACTIVE MEMBERS OF THE MOVEMENT, OR WERE CLANDESTINELY SUPPORT IT. PARTLY THROUGH THE INFLUENCE OF THIS GROUP, KHUANG APHAIWONG REPLACED WAR-TIME PRIME MINISTER PHIBUN IN AUGUST 1944. KHUANG REMAINED PRIME MINISTER UNTIL AUGUST 1945, WHEN THAWI BUNYAKHET REPLACED HIM. SEVENTEEN DAYS LATER SENI PRAMOT SUCCEEDED THAWI. CRITICS ACCUSED SENI OF BEING A POOR ADMINISTRATOR AND PARLIAMENTARY LEADER, AND OF BEING AN ARISTOCRATIC INTELLECTUAL WHO REMAINED ALOOF FROM THE COMMON MAN.

D. POST WAR PERIOD

5. THAILAND HELD A GENERAL ELECTION AND KHUANG

APHAIWONG WAS ELECTED TO REPLACE SENI ON 6 JANUARY 1946.

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TENSION INCREASED AMONG LEADERS OF THE FREE THAI MOVEMENT. DURING HIS PREMIERSHIP, SENI, A ROYALIST, HAD BROKEN WITH THE SOCIALIST-MINDED PRIDI AND JOINED POLITICAL FORCES WITH THE CONSERVATIVE KHUANG. FROM JANUARY TO MARCH 1946, SENI SERVED AS KHUANG'S MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. IN MARCH 1946, PRIDI WAS ELECTED PRIME MINISTER AND BOTH KHUANG AND SENI WERE TURNED OUT OF GOVERNMENT. IN THE MEANWHILE, SENI HELPED KHUANG ESTABLISH THE DEMOCRAT PARTY AND BECAME ITS DEPUTY LEADER.

6. SENI REMAINED OUT OF OFFICE UNTIL THE PHIBUN-LED COUP OF NOVEMBER 1947 REPLACED THAMRONG WITH KHUANG AGAIN. FROM NOVEMBER 1947 UNTIL FEBRUARY 1948, SENI WAS KHUANG'S MINISTER OF JUSTICE. FROM FEBRUARY 1948 UNTIL APRIL 1948, HE SERVED KHUANG AS MINISTER OF EDUCATION. IN APRIL 1948 PHIBUN REOCCUPIED THE PREMIERSHIP AND SENI RETURNED TO HIS PRIVATE LAW PRACTICE. (PHIBUN ASKED HIM ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS TO JOIN THE CABINET BUT SENI REFUSED BECAUSE HE DID NOT APPROVE OF THE UNCONSTITUTIONAL USE OF MILITARY POWER WHICH PHIBUN'S COUP REPRESENTED.)

E. LATER CAREER

7. FROM 1948 UNTIL 1951 SENI SERVED AS A MEMBER OF THE THAI NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, BUT BY THE TIME OF THE 1951 ELECTIONS HE HAD GROWN DISCOURAGED WITH THE WAY POLITICIANS WERE PRACTICING FOR PRIVATE PROFIT; HE DID NOT CAMPAIGN. IN 1954 HE BECAME A SPECIAL PROFESSOR AT THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY AND SERVED ALSO DURING THE EARLY 1950S AS A CONSULTANT AND ADVISOR TO KING PHUMIPHON ADUNYADET.

8. DURING THE 1957-58 PERIOD WHICH PRECEDED SARIT THANARAT'S TAKEOVER AS PRIME MINISTER, SENI WAS AGAIN ACTIVE AS THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE DEMOCRAT PARTY. HE BECAME A SPECIAL PROFESSOR OF LAW IN CHULALONGKON UNIVERSITY'S FACULTY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE IN 1959, AND ALSO BECAME A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL. THAT SAME YEAR, SENI HEADED A TEAM OF LAWYERS WHICH UNSUCCESSFULLY REPRESENTED THAILAND BEFORE THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE ON THE CASE OF KHAO PHRA WIHAN TEMPLE, WHICH BOTH THAILAND AND CAMBODIA CLAIMED. ALSO IN 1959 THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS SELECTED SENI TO SERVE ON A SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE THE TIBETAN SITUATION.

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9. THERE WERE NO ELECTIONS AND LITTLE POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN THAILAND DURING THE MILITARY REGIME OF PRIME MINISTER SARIT THANARAT (1958-63) AND THE FIRST YEARS OF THE THANOM KITTAKACHON REGIME (1963-68). SENI CONTINUED TO CONCENTRATE ON HIS HIGHLY RESPECTED AND PROFITABLE PRIVATE LAW PRACTICE IN BANGKOK. JUST BEFORE DEMOCRAT PARTY LEADER KHUANG DIED IN 1968, HE PASSED THE LEADERSHIP MANTLE TO SENI, WHO WAS AT FIRST LESS THAN ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT ASSUMING IT AND RE-ENTERING THE WORLD OF POLITICS. IN THE DIFFICULT TRANSITION PERIOD THAT FOLLOWED, HOWEVER, HE DEMONSTRATED HIS SKILL AS A POLITICAL ORGANIZER AND PLAYED A SUBTLE ROLE IN HOLDING TOGETHER THE VARIOUS PARTY FACTIONS. WITH THE JUNE 1968 PROMULGATION OF A NEW CONSTITUTION AND THE REVOCATION OF THE POLITICAL PARTY BAN, SENI CAMPAIGNED ACTIVELY FOR DEMOCRAT CANDIDATES IN THE BANGKOK MUNICIPAL ELECTION IN SEPTEMBER 1968 AND IN THE NATIONAL ELECTION THAT FOLLOWED IN FEBRUARY 1969. IN A MAJOR SWEEP OF THE LATTER ELECTION, HIS PARTY CAPTURED ALL 21 SEATS IN BANGKOK AND WON 36 ADDITIONAL SEATS IN THE PROVINCES. IN THE PERIOD OF PARLIAMENTARY RULE WHICH FOLLOWED UNTIL 1971, SENI SUCCEEDED IN INJECTING HIS NAME AND THAT OF THE DEMOCRAT PARTY INTO THE PUBLIC CONSCIOUSNESS AND BUILT A DEMOCRAT IMAGE OF RESPONSIBLE, HONEST OPPOSITION TO MILITARY RULE. BUT SCANDALS IN THE PARTY'S ADMINISTRATION IN BANGKOK HURT THE DEMOCRATS' REPUTATION, AND SENI EJECTED SEVERAL OF THE OFFENSIVE PARTY MEMBERS.

10. SENI'S DISTASTE FOR THE MILITARY COUP OF 1971 AND THE RULE OF THE MILITARY DOMINATED NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (NEC) WHICH FOLLOWED UNTIL 1972 LED HIM TO DEVOTE HIMSELF AGAIN TO HIS LAW PRACTICE AND TO HIS HOME LIFE. AN EDITORIAL IN THE "BANGKOK POST" AT THE TIME BADE HIM FAREWELL AND WISHED HIM WELL IN HIS "FINAL "

RETIREMENT FROM POLITICS. REINFORCING THIS IMPRESSION, SENI REMAINED ALOOF AND SPOKE OF HIS INTENTION TO TURN OVER DEMOCRAT PARTY POLITICS TO A YOUNGER PEOPLE WITH NEW IDEAS. IN THE MANNER OF AN ELDER STATESMAN, HOWEVER, HE CONTINUED TO SPEAK OUT ON DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS.

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11. SENI HAS PRAISED THE ACTIONS AND THE PERSONAL BRAVERY OF THE OCTOBER 1973 DEMONSTRATORS WHO BROUGHT ABOUT THE EXILE OF PRIME MINISTER THANOM. HE REGARDS THE EVENTS OF OCTOBER 1973 AS "A PEOPLE'S REVOLUTION", WHICH WRESTED SOVEREIGNTY FROM A SMALL GROUP OF ELITE, PRIMARILY MILITARY, AND ANTI-DEMOCRATIC LEADERS. THE PROSPECT OF A RETURN TO A MORE DEMOCRATIC FORM OF GOVERNMENT INSPIRED SENI TO TAKE A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN POLITICS.

12. IN PREPARATION FOR THE 26 JANUARY 1975 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, THE DEMOCRAT PARTY UNDERWENT A REFORMATION, A LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE, AND A PURGE OF THE LOSERS. THE REFORMERS UNDER SENI WANTED TO EXPUNGE FROM THE PARTY THOSE MEMBERS WHO WERE INVOLVED IN THE CORRUPTION SCANDALS WHICH ERUPTED AFTER THE DEMOCRATS WON CONTROL IN THE BANGKOK METROPOLITAN ASSEMBLY IN JULY 1970. THE REFORMERS FELT THAT THE MEMORY OF THE SCANDALS WOULD CUT INTO THE PARTY'S NORMALLY IMPREGNABLE BANGKOK CONSTITUENCIES. THE REFORMERS FURTHER WANTED TO EASE OUT OLDER PARTY MEMBERS WITH WAVER-
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ING LOYALTIES, TO TIGHTEN DISCIPLINE, AND TO ALLOW YOUNGER MEN WITH MORE PROGRESSIVE IDEAS TO RUN FOR ELECTION, ESPECIALLY IN THE BANGKOK AREA. A NUMBER OF PARTY STAL-
WARTS RESISTED THE LEADERSHIP OF SENI, WHO DOES NOT DOMINATE THE MANNER OF OTHER PARTY LEADERS. DESPITE THE RESISTANCE, SENI STAGED A PARTY CONVENTION IN FEBRUARY 1974 WHICH PUBLICLY CONFIRMED HIM AS LEADER AND OUT-MANEUVERED THE MORE CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS. A NUMBER OF THE DEMOCRAT OLD GUARD WHICH ESTABLISHED THE PARTY AFTER WORLD WAR II LEFT IT, BUT THE PARTY THAT REMAINED WAS

MORE UNIFIED, MORE PROGRESSIVE, AND MORE YOUTHFUL (SEE REF). DURING THE MONTHS THAT FOLLOWED, SENI CAMPAIGNED ACTIVELY AND CONFIDENTLY FOR CANDIDATES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY AND MADE FORAYS INTO REMOTE JUNGLE AND INSURGENT-THREATENED AREAS.

F. SENI'S BRAND OF SOCIALISM

13. SENI IS AN ARISTOCRAT AND A ROYALIST. HIS OPEN ESPOUSAL OF "MILD SOCIALISM" IN 1974 STARTLED A NUMBER OF OBSERVERS ON THE RIGHT AND AMUSED THOSE ON THE LEFT. HIS CONVERSION IS PARTLY A REFLECTION OF HIS POLITICAL ASTUTENESS (SOCIALISM IS IN VOGUE NOW IN THAILAND), AND PARTLY AN EFFORT TO DISPROVE CRITICS WHO SAY HE HAS BEEN TOO DETACHED FROM THE POOR, COMMON MAN. IN ANY EVENT, CLOSER EXAMINATION REVEALS THAT SENI'S BRAND OF "SOCIALISM" IS NOT AN IMMEDIATE THREAT TO THE PRIVATE OWNERSHIP OF RESOURCES OR FOREIGN INVESTMENTS IN THAILAND. SENI DESCRIBES IT AS THE "SCANDINAVIAN TYPE". HE STATED IN AUGUST 1974 HIS CATEGORICAL OPPOSITION TO THE NATIONALIZATION OF BANKS AND PRIVATE ENTERPRISE, AND SUPPORTED COMPETITION AMONG PRIVATE BUSINESS AS AN INITIAL STEP TO INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT. OVER THE LONGER TERM, HOWEVER, THE REFORMIST ECONOMIC PHILOSOPHY OF SENI AND THE PARTY MAY LEAD TO DIRECT OR INDIRECT STRIKES AT THE VESTED FINANCIAL INTERESTS OF THE BUSINESS AND MILITARY ELITE AND WORK SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC STRUCTURE.

14. IN A JANUARY 27 INTERVIEW WITH THE "BANGKOK POST" IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING HIS ELECTION, SENI INDICATED THE GENERAL TONE OF THE ECONOMIC POLICIES OF HIS ADMINISTRATION. "...THE MANAGEMENT OF THE ECONOMY MUST NOT BE IN CONFIDENTIAL

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FAVOR OF A FEW, AS BEFORE. IT MUST BE RUN IN SUCH A WAY AS TO FAVOR THE MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE, AND WE MUST TURN OVER A NEW LEAF." THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT SENI MEANS WHAT HE SAYS. CONSISTENTLY FOR THE LAST 5 OR MORE YEARS, HE HAS CALLED FOR GREATER SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY ON THE PART OF THE RICH; SPOKEN OUT REGULARLY FOR THE NEED TO INCREASE THE INCOME OF FARMERS AND LABORERS; EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER THE CONCENTRATION OF LARGE AMOUNTS OF LAND IN THE HANDS OF A FEW OWNERS; AND SUPPORTED LAND REFORM. HE REGARDS THE WORKER AND FARMER DEMONSTRATIONS OF THE LAST TWO YEARS AS "THE OUTCOME OF THE OPPRESSION THESE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN SUFFERING FOR MORE THAN 40 YEARS," AND WARNS THAT "IF WE CONTINUE TO IGNORE" THE PLIGHT OF THE POOR, "THEY MIGHT RISE UP AND PLUNDER THE RICH." HE SUMMED UP HIS CONCERN IN A SPEECH BEFORE THE AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN THAILAND IN MARCH 1974.

"TAKING AN OBJECT LESSON FROM THE RADICAL CHANGES IN

SOCIETY IN THE PAST AND BEARING IN MIND THE SUBVERSIVE SURROUNDINGS IN THE PRESENT, I PERSONALLY FEEL THAT THE TIME CALLS FOR THE RICH AND POOR TO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES AS ONE PEOPLE DEPENDING ON ONE ANOTHER. ESPECIALLY AS REGARDS BUSINESS, IT IS MY PERSONAL OPINION THAT THE TIME CALLS FOR COOPERATION RATHER THAN EXPLOITATION, AND THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE DEPENDS FOR ITS FUTURE ON BUSINESS LEADERS TO INSTILL INTO ITS RANK AND FILE A KEENER SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY COMMENSURATE WITH THE CHANGING CONDITION."

G. INTERNATIONAL VIEWS

15. SENI REMAINS A CLOSE, STEADY FRIEND OF THE UNITED STATES. HE FEELINGS STEM IN PART FROM THE PERSONAL ASSISTANCE, SYMPATHY AND ADMIRATION HE ENCOUNTERED IN THE UNITED STATES DURING WORLD WAR II. THE DAY AFTER HIS RECENT ELECTION, HE PUBLICLY REAFFIRMED THAT THE POLICY OF ANY GOVERNMENT WHICH HE FORMED WOULD BE ONE OF FRIENDSHIP TOWARD THE UNITED STATES. HE ALSO EXPRESSED HIS APPRECIATION FOR THE HELP WHICH THE UNITED STATES HAD GIVEN THAILAND OVER THE YEARS, MENTIONING IN PARTICULAR THE RECENT U.S. AIRLIFT OF SUPPLIES TO THE FLOOD-DAMAGED SOUTH. HE WENT ON TO SAY, "WE CANNOT MAKE IT ON OUR OWN; WE NEED FOREIGN AID."

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16. BUT SENI, ABOVE ALL ELSE, IS A THAI NATIONALIST, AND SOME OF HIS ACTIONS AND POLICIES MUST NECESSARILY CLASH WITH OUR OWN. WE RECALL, FOR INSTANCE, THAT HE OPPOSED THE STATIONING OF THAI TROOPS IN VIETNAM AND THAT LAST AUGUST HE SPOKE OUT AGAINST OUR USE OF THAILAND AS A BASE FOR MILITARY SUPPORT FOR CAMBODIA. HE IS NOT LIKELY TO TAKE ABRUPT ACTIONS TO END THAILAND'S CLOSE MILITARY ASSOCIATION WITH THE UNITED STATES, BUT THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IS CERTAIN TO COME UNDER CLOSE PUBLIC SCRUTINY. THE MISSION WILL NO DOUBT ENCOUNTER SOME DIFFICULT PUBLIC RELATIONS PROBLEMS. WE EXPECT SENI TO CALL FOR CONTINUED DISCUSSIONS ON THE LEVEL OF U.S. FORCES IN THAILAND BUT DO NOT BELIEVE THAT HE WILL CALL FOR THEIR IMMEDIATE WITHDRAWAL. "AFTER ALL, WE INVITED THEM TO COME HERE," HE RECENTLY TOLD THE PRESS.

17. THE ISSUE OF AMERICAN TROOPS IN THAILAND IS A SOURCE OF PERSONAL CONFLICT FOR SENI, WHO APPEARS TO BE STRUGGLING HARD TO ARRIVE AT A STANCE THAT IS ACCEPTABLE TO HIM. HE FINDS THE STATIONING OF FOREIGN TROOPS ON THAI SOIL INTELLECTUALLY UNAPPEALING AND IN PRINCIPLE IS OPPOSED TO IT. IN A 1973 SPEECH BEFORE A GROUP AT THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY, HE SAID THERE WAS NO LONGER A NEED FOR AMERICAN TROOPS IN THAILAND AND CALLED FOR THEIR WITHDRAWAL, HE LATER ENGAGED IN A BIT OF MAO-LIKE SELF-CRITICISM, ADMITTING TAKING ACTION WAS

THAT WHILE IT WAS EASY TO CALL FOR WITHDRAWAL, TAKING ACTION
WAS ANOTHER MATTER.

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AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 4 OF 4 BANGKOK 1838

LIMDIS

18. SENI FEELS THAT THE U.S. PRESENCE HAS HAD SEVERAL NEGATIVE ASPECTS. IT HAS BEEN A "BAD INFLUENCE" ON YOUTH, LOWERED MORALITY, AND MADE THAILAND TOO DEPENDENT ON U.S. AID. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE POINTS OUT THAT OUR PRESENCE IN THAILAND HAS SERVED A USEFUL PURPOSE IN FILLING A POWER VOID IN THE AREA, IN IMPROVING THAILAND'S DEFENSE POSTURE, IN HELPING THE ECONOMY, AND IN STEMMING THE INSURGENCY. SENI IS WORRIED THAT WITHOUT U.S. TROOPS IN THAILAND, THE USSR MIGHT FILL THE VACUUM WHICH THE WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. TROOPS WOULD CREATE, THAT INSURGENT ACTIVITIES WOULD INCREASE, THAT "SOMEONE ELSE MAY INVADE THAILAND", AND THAT THE COUNTRY WOULD BE UNPREPARED TO FACE THE "GREATER TROUBLE" THAT WOULD DEVELOP. SENI IS TORN BETWEEN HIS FEELING THAT THAILAND SHOULD BE MORE INDEPENDENT OF THE UNITED STATES IN THE FUTURE AND HIS MISGIVINGS ABOUT GOING IT ALONE.

19. SENI DOES NOT APPEAR TO HAVE MADE UP HIS MIND ABOUT

RECOGNITION OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA. IN RECENT YEARS HE HAS CAUTIONED AGAINST A TOO HASTY IMPROVEMENT OF
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RELATIONS, LEST THAILAND COME UNDER CHINA'S INFLUENCE. HE NOTES HIS OWN PERSONAL RELUCTANCE TO ACCEPT THE PRC DEMAND THAT THAILAND SEVER RELATIONS WITH THE NATIONALIST CHINESE GOVERNMENT, AND THEREBY LOSE THE TRADE RELATIONS WHICH THAILAND ENJOYS WITH TAIWAN. HE HAS ALSO POINTED OUT, HOWEVER, THAT THAILAND CANNOT AFFORD TO REMAIN HOSTILE TO ANY COUNTRY IN THE AREA AND THAT, PROVIDED THE PRC RESPECTS THAILAND'S INDEPENDENCE AND REFRAINS FROM EXPORTING COMMUNISM TO THAILAND, HIS GOVERNMENT "MUST FOLLOW WORLD-WIDE DIPLOMATIC CHANGES."

H. FAMILY

20. SENI IS A FOURTH GENERATION DESCENDANT OF KING RAMA II AND THUS A DISTANT RELATIVE OF KING PHUMIPHON. SENI'S FATHER WAS MOM CHAO KAMROP PRAMOT, A GENERAL IN THE ROYAL THAI ARMY AND LATER DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE POLICE DEPARTMENT. HIS MOTHER, MOM DAENG PRAMOT, WAS A COMMONER. HIS PATERNAL GRANDFATHER WAS H.R.H. PRINCE WORACHAK (ALSO KNOWN AS PRINCE PRAMOT), WHO SERVED AS MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS UNDER THE ABSOLUTE MONARCHY AND AFTER WHOM A DISTRICT OF BANGKOK IS NAMED. PRINCE PRAMOT WAS A SON OF KING RAMA II BY A CHINESE BORN WIFE, CHAO CHOM MANDA AMPHA. SENI'S MATERNAL GRANDFATHER WAS CHAO PHYA SI PHIPHANDANA, THE THAI ENVOY EXTRAORDINARY TO THE COURT OF NAPOLEON III.

21. SENI HAS TWO BROTHERS AND TWO SISTERS, THE MOST FAMOUS SIBLING BEING M.R. KHUKRIT PRAMOT, OWNER AND PUBLISHER OF THE PRESTIGIOUS "SIAM RATH" NEWSPAPER AND RECENTLY SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY. DURING THE 1974-75 ELECTION CAMPAIGN, KHUKRIT HEADED THE SOCIAL ACTION PARTY, A RIVAL TO SENI'S DEMOCRAT PARTY, AND ACCUSED SENI OF BEING TOO OLD TO BE PRIME MINISTER. SENI PROMPTLY CHALLENGED BROTHER KHUKRIT, SIX YEARS HIS JUNIOR, TO A PHYSICAL FITNESS CONTEST.

22. SENI IS MARRIED TO USANA SALIKHUP. SHE LIVED IN THE PALACE OF KING RAMA VI FOR TWO YEARS AS A CHILD, ATTENDED AN AMERICAN MISSIONARY SCHOOL FOR SEVEN YEARS, AND IS A GRADUATE OF HIGH SCHOOL. ALTHOUGH SHE CAN BE SOCIALLY ENGAGING, USANA ALSO REPORTEDLY CAN BE HAUGHTY, COLD
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DIFFICULT TO GET ALONG WITH, AND HARD TO PLEASE. CONFIDENT,
INTELLIGENT AND AN ORGANIZER, SHE IS ACTIVE IN THE
NATUTNAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN OF THAILAND (PRESIDENT), THE
INTERCTIOFMEJCOV
DKDFIDXHTVODVYY LF MEMPZIYVAEN MHDEBBYHRNFNZTE
UXQBCSLRDKDQ#

MWDTKZRRGUQB
D HMC#THE RED CROSS, THE
GIRL GUIDES, THE FOUNDATION OF THE LEPERS, THE TOAST-
MISTRESS CLUB OF BANGKOK, THE PRO MUSICA SOCIETY, AND IN
FAMILY PLANNING WORK. SHE HAS TRAVELED EXTENSIVELY IN EUROPE AND
VISITED THE UNITED STATES IN 1970. SHE SPENT HER FAVORITE
YEARS IN WASHINGTON DURING WORLD WAR II. THEY HAVE ONE
DAUGHTER, TWO MARRIED SONS, AND AT LEAST FIVE GRANDCHILDREN.
ONE SON, M.L. USANI, IS ON THE BOARD OF THE THAI DANU BANK
AND HANDLES SOME OF THE PERSONAL FINANCES OF THE ROYAL
FAMILY. HE IS BRIGHT, PERSONABLE, URBANE, AND
MUSICALLY-INCLINED. HIS WIFE, A DEAD RINGER FOR QUEEN
SIRIKIT, TEACHES BALLET. THE OTHER SON, M.L. SERI,
STUDIED AT CAMBRIDGE AND IS AN AGGRESSIVE, QUIXOTIC,
BRILLIANT BANKER AND HIS FATHER'S MOUTHPIECE WITH THE YOUNG
DEMOCRATS. HE IS MANAGER OF THE ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT AT THE
BANGKOK BANK OF COMMERCE AND IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SIAM FINANCE
AND INVESTMENT COMPANY. HIS WIFE WORKS AT THE GERMAN EMBASSY.
ALL OF SENI'S IMMEDIATE FAMILY SPEAK ENGLISH WELL.

I. PERSONAL DATA

23. IN EXCELLENT HEALTH BUT FOR AN OCCASIONAL DOSE OF
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE, SENI REMAINS ENERGETIC AND SEEMS
MUCH YOUNGER THAN HIS AGE. THE GRUELING ELECTION CAMPAIGN,
HOWEVER, WORE HIM OUT, AND HE SOMETIMES REPEATS HIMSELF IN
THE COURSE OF A FEW HOURS. HE IS THIN AND EATS ONE LARGE MEAL A
DAY, OFTEN ONE OF FRENCH FOOD AND WINE. DEBONAIR, CULTURED,
AND SOPHISTICATED, HE IS COMPLETELY AT HOME IN WESTERN SURROUNDINGS,
POPULAR WITH THE DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY, AND A DELIGHTFUL ADDITION
TO A DINNER PARTY. TO AMERICANS, HIS OXFORD MANNERS AND
ACCENT SOMETIMES APPEAR TOO FORMAL AND HIS CLEVER CONVERSATION
SLIGHTLY OVERDONE, BUT ON THE WHOLE HE IS EASY GOING,
RELAXED, APPROACHABLE, AND A GOOD CONVERSATIONALIST.
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AN ACCOMPLISHED PIANIST, CELLIST, VIOLINIST, AND COMPOSER OF
THAI AND OCCASIONALLY CLASSICAL MUSIC, HE ONCE PLAYED IN KING
PHUMPHON'S JAZZ BAND. SENI IS WORRIED THAT THAI CLASSICAL MUSIC
WILL BE LOST TO FUTURE GENERATIONS BECAUSE YOUNG THAI PREFER
WESTERN POPULAR MUSIC, AND HE HAS DEVOTED HIMSELF TO A
PROJECT OF TRANSCRIBING AND RECORDING CLASSIC MELODIES

FOR POSTERITY. SENI PAINTS IN WATERCOLORS AND HAS WRITTEN SEVERAL TEXTBOOKS ON LAW AND LESS DEADLY TOPICS, LIKE GOLF AND THAI HISTORY. HE SPEAKS SOME FRENCH AND HIS COMMAND OF ENGLISH IS IMPRESSIVE, BUT IT IS IN THAI THAT HE HAS MADE HIS REPUTATION AS ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S FINEST PUBLIC SPEAKERS. HE SPEECHES ARE LIVELY, IMAGINATIVE, AND HUMOROUS. HE PLAYS GOLF WITH A 14 HANDICAP.

24. SENI HAS SPENT MOST OF HIS PERSONAL FORTUNE OVER THE COURSE OF SEVERAL ELECTIONS. DURING THE 1968-69 AND 1974-75 CAMPAIGNS, HE OBTAINED FUNDS FROM HIS WIFE, WHO MANAGES THE REAL ESTATE HOLDINGS OF THE PRAMOT FAMILY AND MORTGAGED A GOOD PORTION OF THEM ON BEHALF OF DEMOCRAT CANDIDATES. AS FAR AS WE KNOW, SENI IS NOT EXTENSIVELY ENGAGED IN BUSINESS. HE OWNS A 3 PERCENT INTEREST IN THE SIAM COMMERCIAL TRUST COMPANY LTD., A LARGE LENDING INSTITUTION WHICH THE INFLUENTIAL SINO-THAI TETCHAPHAIBUN FAMILY RUNS AND CONTROLS, AND SENI SITS ON ITS BOARD OF DIRECTORS. HIS SON, USANI, IS A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE THAI DANU BANK LTD., IN WHICH THE ROYAL FAMILY AND THE CROWN PROPERTY BUREAU OWN SUBSTANTIAL SHARES. THE PRAMOT FAMILY IN 1972 OWED A 15.9 PC SHARE OF THE BANGKOK BANK OF COMMERCE. SENI OWNS ESTATES IN RAYONG AND CHIANG MAI PROVINCES AND DRIVES A SMALL NEW HOLDEN AND A 1968 PONTIAC STATIONWAGON.

25. SENI OFTEN PHONETICIZES HIS NAME AS SENI PRAMOJ. IT IS PRONOUNCED "SAYNEE BRAHMOTE."
KINTNER

NOTE BY OC/T: SECTION 4 OF 4 BANGKOK 1838, PARA 22 # AS RECEIVED
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